

# Toxic polluter pays \$25,000

Court orders CVC Circuits to give Wildlife Center \$10K, environmental agencies \$15K

By KATE WOODS  
Pinnacle Staff Writer

San Benito's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center will be receiving \$10,000 soon, thanks to a sentencing deal arranged between the D.A.'s office, toxic polluter Greg Short and the county's Superior Court.

"The idea is that it brings benefit back to the community and helps repair our damaged environment," said Roy Hubert, the county's special environmental circuit prosecutor who handled the case.

Short, the former owner of a Hollister circuit board company, received formal sentencing Wednesday for felony hazardous waste dumping over a five-year period, prior to Short's eviction from a building in the industrial area across from the airport in December 2001. It wasn't until March 2004 that it was discovered that Short had been dumping harsh liquid chemicals into the Hollister sewer system, instead of hauling them to a state-certified toxic waste facility as required by law.

"It presented a scary set of conditions involving our water quality and harmful exposures to individuals that worked for him," Hubert said. "It was a tremendous task just to deal with the toxic materials."

Short's insurance paid for the cleanup costs of the facility, though Hubert said he doesn't know the total. The defendant was also given three years felony probation and a \$25,000 fine: \$10,000 will go to the Nan Pipestem Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, \$10,000 to the State Environmental Protection Agency and \$5,000 to the state Department of Toxic Substances Control, the agency that assisted in investigating the case. Hubert said Short has indicated he will pay the fine in three lump sums within the next several weeks.

Meredith Pipestem, the retired director of the wildlife center, was unaware that District Attorney John Sarsfield and Hubert had hatched the deal.

"Oh my God!" Pipestem exclaimed upon hearing the news. "That is so wonderful. I mean, it's terrible that he did that toxic stuff. But that's such good news. That's really going to help us out. Lord knows, as a nonprofit it's really tough, and, you know, the patients who come in here have no money."

CVC Circuits was a business that operated a photographic development process using harsh chemicals to etch printed circuit motherboards — the essential component for the central processing unit or "brain" of computers.

Normally, the leftover toxic sludge used in the process is placed into 55-gallon drums filled with steel wool. The silver toxins collect on the steel wool and the residue is taken away by a service that specializes in such removals. Other liquid chemicals, such as copper sludge and base acids laced with arsenic and lead are stored in drums that are hauled away to a hazardous waste site by EPA-certified waste handlers.

But that wasn't the case with CVC, Inc. Short simply hooked up pipe lines from their development machines into the building's sewer lines — and it all ended up in Hollister's overburdened sewage ponds, which percolated into county aquifers.

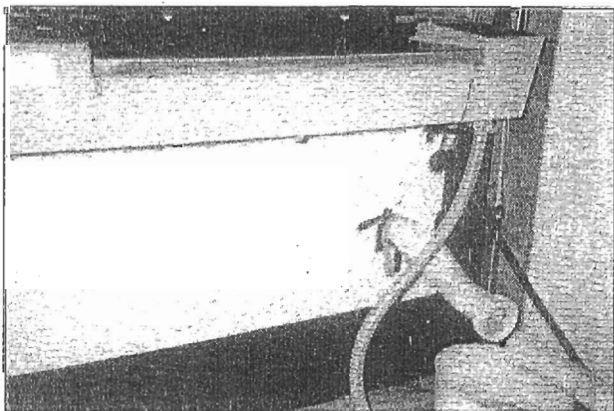
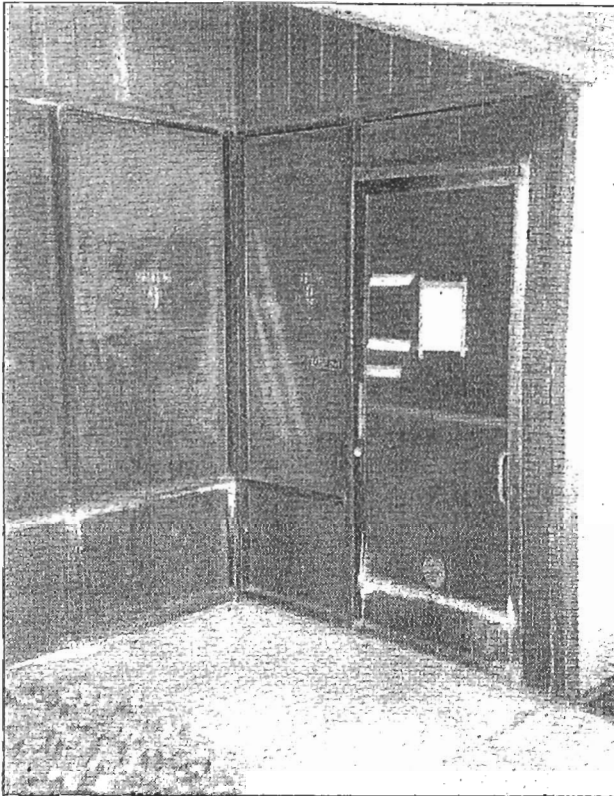
By the time the mess was discovered by the landlord, said Hubert, the inside pipes were "corroded to hell." Some of the evidence photos revealed processing tables and sewage pipes encrusted with aqua-blue carbuncles of hardened copper residue. The walls and floors also had thick layers of chemical residues, which leached through the front door of the office suite.

At the time, Hubert said it reminded him of "a filthy urinal."

Pipestem said the unexpected windfall could not have come at a better time. Last week the center held its annual banquet-auction fundraiser, but attendance was low. The center, which normally relies on the annual fundraiser for half of its yearly budget, netted only \$3,050 instead of the usual \$7,000 to \$10,000.

"And starting now (springtime) we're going to get a lot of calls from people who want us to pick up hurt animals, and unfortunately they neglect to offer money," Pipestem said. "They don't realize how much money it takes to keep this place going — from heating pads to animal feed and formulas to the manpower, even running the laundry machine for bedding. This is just a wonderful surprise."

According to Hubert, Short moved to Oregon shortly after his hazardous dumping was discovered. In October of last year the Criminal Grand Jury indicted Short of three felony counts involving toxic waste dumping. He pleaded guilty, but his absence presented problems in resolving the terms of the sentencing until now. Short now runs a firewood business in Oregon.



Pinnacle File Photos

**TOP:** The front glass windows of the Central Valley Circuits facility were heavily damaged by the chemicals used inside in the plating operations. **ABOVE:** A photo developing machine's waste chemicals were discharged from the machine to the sewer by plastic pvc pipe connected directly to the sewer. A sample obtained from gray solid waste material in the discharge pipe meets the toxicity criteria of a hazard for silver.

## A Special Thank You

Acts of kindness can really warm the heart, soothe the soul and make the world turn a little more gently.

It's so nice to know there are still people who take pleasure in doing special things when someone is in need.

All of the wonderful people in Hollister, who took time out of their busy lives to make my benefit a huge success, I will never forget you.

Even though I don't have all of your names and didn't get the opportunity to meet each and every one of you. All of you will have a very special place in my heart.

It's people like you that give me the strength to get through yet another day.

With my deepest gratitude from my family and myself to all of the following:

Johnny's Bar & Grill, Charisse and all of her staff for so graciously planning and organizing a lot of the preparation to make this benefit such a big success.

Pennywise Drug Store, Rick Rice, Jennie, Jeana, Silvia, Wendy, Carlette Oracio Galvan, Dottie Howell, Post Net, Margie Valderrama and Family, Rosie & Alfonso Martinez, Boutique de Lingerie, Robert Postigo Construction, James Chapman, San Benito Foods, Mark & Paula Metzler, Safeway, Pride Of San Juan, John Sanchez, Daniel Cazarez, Ken Jones, Dave & Linda Frisbee, Roman Rodriguez, Kirk Tognazzini, Greenwood Chevrolet, Enterprise Electric, Rolling Hills Church, Granger Printing, Frank Velasquez, Acc Hardware, Speedy Oil Change, Kelly's Gifts, She's, Dorothy Mc Nets, The Pinnacle, Main St. Bistro, Drapoel, Good Times Bowl, San Benito Bank, Muenzers, Big Secrets, Roxy's, Las Palmas, The Vault, Terra Yuste, Debbie Allred, Sharon Green, Irene Hurtado, Denise Padilla, Nancy Brody, Eddie Falconi, Joan Rosati, Al & Carmen Martinez, Ludwig Anker, Alejo Hernandez, Margie Barrios, Jose Servin, Dave Baumgartner, John Gutierrez, Parry Fletcher, Hollister Eye Vision, Kathy Provost, Teresa Toledo, Lori Castello, Dora Del Real, Linda Righetti, and Jethro

I know that there are a lot of wonderful people who made donations on my behalf that I have not recognized, but please know that your spirit was with me.

I hope everyone stays safe and in good health and GOD BLESS!

Jessica Vargas Valderrama and Family

The Sunday Pinnacle  
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